



Lambda Letters Project

32592

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Defense of Marriage? Call It Anti-Marriage

Lavender Library, Archives
and Cultural Exchange
Sacramento, CA

By Hilary Cook

In June an organization calling itself the Defense of Marriage Committee launched an initiative to prevent the state of California from legalizing any marriage performed here—or recognizing any out-of-state marriage—that was not strictly between “one man and one woman.” This initiative, if passed, would attempt to prevent same-sex marriages performed in Hawaii from being valid in California (although this part may be unconstitutional). Two bills with the same mean-spirited goal were defeated in the legislature this year. Now the same anti-gay forces are taking the question to the streets.

If this initiative qualifies for the 1998 November ballot, it will likely impact more than same-sex marriage. The 1998 elections will see the selection of a governor, and a new state assembly and senate. The presence of such an initiative will tend to draw very conservative voters to the polling booth. The risk is that recent gains made in the assembly and senate will be lost.

In states where so called “defense of marriage” laws have passed, such laws have tended to overflow

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Sacramento Drummer Fund Keeps on Drumming

In June the Sacramento Drummer Fund held its annual Mr. Drummer contest and used the event to raise funds for the Lambda Letters Project and for the Positive Gourmet. The Positive Gourmet is an organization that provides nourishing meals to people living with HIV. The Lambda Letters Project received \$438 from that event.

In early August the Mr. Sacramento Drummer Fund held another event and raised an additional \$184 for Lambda Letters. Mike Butler of Sacramento organized both events and Jeff Greer acted as Lambda Letter's representative at each event. We owe them both a deep debt of gratitude.

Would you like to host or organize a fund-raising event in your community? We would be glad to provide you with any advice and assistance that we can provide. Just let us know.

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Lambda Letters Progress Report

Letters Collected

July, 1997	4,840 letters
In all of 1997	29,582 letters

Dollars Spent

July, 1997	\$856
In all of 1997	\$10,731

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Please support the very important work of the Lambda Letters Project with your contributions.

Lambda Letters Project

Statement of Purpose

To promote people of color, feminist, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and HIV/AIDS status advocacy, and to bring people of color, women, lesbians, gays, bisexuals, transgendered persons, and persons affected by or living with HIV/AIDS into full participation in the mainstream of American society now, exercising all the privileges and responsibilities thereof.

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Confidentiality

The Lambda Letters Project does not sell or loan its mailing list to anyone. We give no information about who is, or is not, a member of the Project. We do, occasionally, send mailings on behalf of other worthwhile organizations, but this is done by our own volunteers so that no other organization has the opportunity to copy our mailing lists.

The Lambda Letters Newsletter is published monthly except in December by the
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Postmaster: send address changes to the address above.

Advertising Rates

Business-card sized ads (3½" x 2") \$10 per issue,
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Keeping HIV/AIDS Education in the Schools

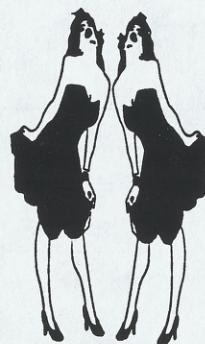
By Boyce Hinman

Please write to Governor Wilson expressing your opposition to S.B. 1110 (Leslie-Roseville). At the time this newsletter went to press, S.B. 1110 was still in the assembly. Unfortunately, we expect it to be approved by the legislature and sent to the governor for signature.

The fundamental problem with this bill is that it would make it very difficult—and expensive—for schools to provide their students with vital information about HIV infection and how to avoid it. S.B. 1110 would prohibit HIV/AIDS training by a school employee, unless prior written notification is given to the parents of each student. If the training is to be given by an outside organization—such as employees of an AIDS foundation or by a health care professional—parents must receive additional information prior to the training. This additional information includes the date of the training, the name of the organization or affiliation of each guest speaker, and copies of the laws relating to AIDS prevention instruction and sex education.

These requirements make it difficult for schools to provide this training and particularly difficult to bring in outside experts to provide it. Many school districts might just not bother.

Yet HIV/AIDS training is absolutely essential. AIDS has now become the leading cause of death among Americans aged 25–44. According to a recent White House report, one in four new HIV infections in this country occur among people under 20. In Califor-



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Pentagon Asking About "Don't Ask"

By Hilary Cook

In February the Servicemembers Legal Defense Network released its third annual report on "Don't Ask, Don't Tell, Don't Pursue," the 1994 policy which prohibits the military from asking servicemembers about their orientation or actively seeking to identify suspected gay members. The report showed that discharges of gays, lesbians, and bisexuals had actually increased since the policy was put in place. Eight hundred and fifty servicemembers were discharged in 1996, the highest rate since 1987.

Members of the military continue to violate Don't Ask, Don't Tell with impunity. Servicemembers suspected of being gay, lesbian, or bisexual continue to be questioned, investigated, and harassed. Women who file a sexual harassment complaint risk becoming the target of a retaliatory witch hunt. While the policy itself is unjust, its enforcement as written would nonetheless constitute a marked improvement in the situation of the many gays, lesbians, and bisexuals serving in the military. Unfortunately, we have yet to see what a true implementation of the policy would look like.

In May the Secretary of Defense set up a Pentagon panel to review ongoing violations of the policy. The Department of Defense has emphasized that the panel is looking at the implementation of the policy and not at the policy itself. This process is ongoing, so it is important the panel know that they are being closely watched. Please sign the letter to Secretary of Defense William S. Cohen, asking him to ensure that the violations don't continue, and letting him know that we are watching with interest the outcome of the panel review.

Silence is the virtue of fools.

—Francis Bacon (1561-1626)

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IN SUPPORT OF
LAMBDA LETTERS PROJECT
Outward

Taking a Stand Against Gangs

By Boyce Hinman

Lambda Letters believes in coalition politics, so we cover women's issues and issues of concern to people of color, as well as AIDS/HIV and lesbian/gay/bisexual/transgender issues. This alert is about a bill of great importance to the people of color community, S.B. 547.

S.B. 547 is authored by State Senator Diane Watson (D-Los Angeles) who has long been a champion of good legislation on AIDS and of bills that are important to the gay community. For example, she gained passage of the Hate Crimes Statistics Act which, among other things, requires the counting of hate crimes based on sexual orientation. This year, as in many years past, she is pushing a bill to establish a clean needle exchange program to combat the spread of AIDS.

Now Senator Watson needs our help on S.B. 547. This bill would establish the position of California Gang Prevention Director within the office of the State Attorney General. This person would be responsible for coordinating statewide gang prevention efforts, directing the collection and analysis of comprehensive data on gang membership and criminal activity statewide, and annually reporting to the legislature and the governor on the state of gang activity and prevention efforts. He or she would also be responsible for developing and tracking anti-gang legislation.

It's worth noting that Attorney General Dan Lungren has expressed support for the bill. According to Los Angeles Mayor Richard Riordan's office, there are currently 1,142 street gangs and 150,000 gang members in Los Angeles alone. In 1995 there were 10,945 gang-related crimes in Los Angeles, an increase of 20 percent

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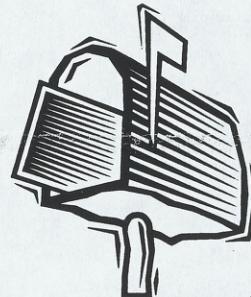
Domestic Violence Bills Go to Governor

By Carla Leek

Among the many bills making their way to Governor Wilson's desk as the session winds down are two related to domestic violence. A.B. 45 and A.B. 200 were both supported by Lambda Letters earlier in the year. A.B. 45 (Murray, D-Culver City) expands the definition of domestic violence to include non-cohabitating partners and people in intimate relationships who do not cohabit.

A.B. 200 (Kuehl, D-Encino) would require that the health, safety, and welfare of the child must be the judge's primary concern when determining who should have custody or visitation rights. If a judge grants custody or visitation rights to someone who is alleged to have a history of committing child or domestic abuse, then the court's order must specify why that person is being granted custody or visitation rights. These provisions should make judges think very carefully before granting custody to an abuser.

Both bills are supported by a host of reputable organizations, and add much-needed teeth to California's domestic violence law. Please sign the enclosed letter encouraging the Governor to sign both bills.



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State Legislative Update: Part V

Here is a report on the status (as of late August) of the bills covered in our monthly newsletter and sample letters, as well as those covered in our frequent e-mail alerts. We have divided them into the four issue areas that we cover.

HIV/AIDS Issues

A.B. 29 (Villaraigosa, D-Los Angeles)

Purpose: To allow compassionate release of terminally ill prisoners.

LLP Position: Support.

Status: Passed both houses. Sent back to the Assembly for concurrence with minor changes made in the Senate.

A.B. 1100 (Thomson, D-Fairfield)

Purpose: To require insurers to provide health insurance coverage for biologically based mental illnesses as fully as they provide coverage for other physical illnesses.

LLP Position: Support.

Status: Passed the Assembly. Passed by the Senate Insurance Committee. Scheduled for vote in the Senate Appropriations Committee on August 25th.

S.B. 535 (Vasconcellos, D-San Jose)

Purpose: Amended to just authorize research on the efficacy and safety of marijuana as a medicine.

LLP Position: Support.

Status: Passed the Senate and the Assembly Higher Education Committee. Scheduled for August 27th vote in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

S.B. 885 (Watson, D-Los Angeles)

Purpose: To establish clean needle exchange pilot projects in four California cities.

LLP Position: Support.

Status: Passed Senate and the Assembly Health Committee. Scheduled for August 27th vote in the Assembly Appropriations Committee.

L/G/B/T Issues

A.B. 257 (Villaraigosa, D-Los Angeles)

Purpose: To add a ban on sexual orientation-based

discrimination to the Fair Employment and Housing Act. Would ban such discrimination in employment, housing, and public accommodations.

LLP Position: Support.

Status: Passed the Assembly and the Senate Judiciary Committee. Scheduled for a vote in the Senate Appropriations Committee on August 25th.

A.B. 310 (Kuehl, D-Encino)

Purpose: To amend the Fair Employment and Housing Act in several ways. It would prohibit sexual harassment of contract workers by an employer. It also would make supervisors liable when they fail to stop discrimination against—or harassment of—one employee by another. The bill also requires employers to make reasonable accommodations for pregnant employees and prohibit employers from discriminating against employees or job applicants on the basis of genetic conditions. For example, they couldn't refuse to hire someone because their family has a history of sickle cell anemia. The bill also states that religious employers may not discriminate against employees on any other basis than religion. For example, Catholic Charities would be allowed to hire only Catholics. Under current law, religious organizations can discriminate on any basis.

LLP Position: Support.

Status: Passed the Assembly and its Senate policy committee. Scheduled for a vote in the Senate Appropriations Committee on August 25th.

A.B. 424 (Baldwin, R-La Mesa)

Purpose: To prevent California's state college and university system from throwing ROTC off campus because it discriminates against lesbians and gays. Under pressure, Mr. Baldwin added language that bans ROTC from such discrimination. However, other language in the bill says that ban will not take effect at the University of California unless the U.C. Regents take specific action to implement it.

LLP Position: Oppose.

Status: Passed the Assembly and the Senate Education Committee. Scheduled for a vote in Senate Appropriations Committee on August 25th.

A.B. 1059 (Migden, D-San Francisco)

Purpose: To require insurers to offer employers the option of offering domestic partner health benefits to their employees. Does not require employers to offer

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Legislative Update

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them to their employees.

LLP Position: Support.

Status: Passed the Assembly and all Senate Committees. Set for vote on the Senate floor soon.

People of Color Issues

A.B. 51 (Murray, D-Culver City)

Purpose: To increase penalties for hate based arson of churches.

LLP Position: Support.

Status: Passed the Assembly and the Senate Public Safety Committee. Scheduled for a vote in the Senate Appropriations Committee on August 18th.

A.B. 1099 (Migden, D-San Francisco)

Purpose: To continue Medi-Cal eligibility without a share of cost, or with a reduced share of cost, for individuals who return to work and are being treated for symptoms of HIV/AIDS or are disabled. These provisions would only apply until a person is eligible for and receives full medical insurance coverage, including prescription drug coverage, from his or her employer.

LLP Position: Support.

Status: Passed the Assembly and the Senate Health and Human Services Committee. Scheduled for a vote in Senate Appropriations Committee on August 25th.

A.B. 748 (Escutia, D-Huntington Park)

Purpose: To require that objective annual studies be done of the primary languages of limited English-proficient students and of their progress in learning English. Results of the study would be used to determine how to modify and improve the methods of teaching English to limited English-proficient students.

LLP Position: Support.

Status: Passed the Assembly and the Senate Education Committee. Scheduled for a vote in the Senate Appropriations Committee on August 25th.

S.B. 6 (Alpert, D-San Diego)

Purpose: To relieve school districts of teaching core curriculum subjects in the primary languages of students with limited English skills.

LLP Position: Oppose.

Status: Passed by the Senate and the Assembly Education Committee. Scheduled for a vote in the Assembly Appropriations Committee on August 27th.

S.B. 547 (Watson, D-Los Angeles)

Purpose: To establish the position of California Gang Prevention Director to coordinate a statewide effort to combat gangs.

LLP Position: Support.

Status: Passed the Senate and the Assembly Judiciary Committee. Scheduled for a vote in the Assembly Appropriations Committee on August 27th.

Women's Issues

A.B. 7 (Brown, D-Santa Rosa)

Purpose: To require health care plans—and some disability plans—to provide a minimum of 48 hours of inpatient hospital care for women undergoing a mastectomy, and no fewer than 24 hours of inpatient care following a lymph node dissection for the treatment of breast cancer.

LLP Position: Support.

Status: Passed the Assembly and all Senate committees. Will be voted on the Senate floor any day.

A.B. 12 (Figueroa, D-Fremont)

Purpose: To require insurers that provide mastectomy coverage to allow the treating physician, in consultation with the patient, to determine the necessary hospital stay after a mastectomy and to provide coverage for a post discharge follow-up visit by a licensed health care provider, within 48 hours of discharge, if ordered by the physician.

LLP Position: Support.

Status: Passed the Assembly and the Senate Insurance Committee. Due for a vote in the Senate Appropriations Committee on August 25th.

A.B. 45 (Murray, D-Culver City)

Purpose: To add a fiancé(e) or someone with whom a domestic abuser has had a dating relationship to the list of legally recognizable victims of domestic abuse.

LLP Position: Support.

Status: Passed the Assembly and the Senate Public Safety Committee. Due for a vote in the Senate Appropriations Committee on August 25th.

A.B. 160 (Hertzberg, D-Van Nuys)

Purpose: To require that California health insurers include coverage for FDA-approved contraceptive drugs.

LLP Position: Support.

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Legislative Update

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Status: Passed the Assembly and all Senate committees. Is awaiting a final vote on the Senate floor.

A.B. 200 (Kuehl D-Encino)

Purpose: To require that the health, safety, and welfare of the child must be the judge's primary concern when determining who should have custody or visitation rights. If the judge grants custody to someone who is alleged to have a history of committing child or domestic abuse then the court's order should specify why that person is being granted custody or visitation rights.

LLP Position: Support.

Status: Passed the Assembly and all Senate committees. Could be voted on the Senate floor any time.

LLP's New Donor Categories

Turn to page 2 and you will see that we have revised the category titles for our sponsors. They now reflect the advocacy work that we do much more than before. We are deeply grateful to the individuals and companies who have contributed so generously to support the work that we do on your behalf. We could not continue without the financial support of the community. Is your name—or your company's name—listed in our honor roll of financial supporters? We could certainly put additional major contributions to good use and it would be our pleasure to add you to our list of major donors. Please consider enclosing a generous contribution with your letter today!

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Defense of Marriage?

Continued from page 1

into other areas. For example, the existence of such a law has been used to oppose adoptions, and in one case even to overturn an adoption that had been granted. Moreover, measures put in place by referendum cannot be repealed by an ordinary act of the legislature.

Recent experiences in Washington and Oregon have shown that it is possible to defeat such initiatives even *before* they get on the ballot. States require a large number of signatures to be collected, demonstrating substantial public support for a measure before it can be placed on the ballot. To qualify in California, the Anti-Marriage Initiative will need to collect almost 500,000 signatures before the new year—approximately 3,000 signatures per day.

By mounting an effective “Decline to Sign” campaign in California, we can accomplish a number of goals at once. First, such a campaign costs only a fraction of the expense to fight such an initiative in an election. Second, we might avoid the ugly debate sure to surround the appearance of such an issue on the ballot. Third, even if the measure does qualify, the education done at the signature stage will be valuable at the voting stage.

LIFE Lobby—the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and AIDS/HIV lobby group based in Sacramento—will be opposing the initiative. They need volunteers from across the state to visit the sites where signatures are being gathered and attempt to politely persuade people not to sign, to visit conservative churches to see if they are gathering signatures, and to coordinate these street-level activities. It is urgent that people get involved from all parts of California.

For more information or to get involved, please contact Ellen McCormick or Sam Catalano by phone at (916) 444-0424, by e-mail at the following address: Ellen.McCormick@lifelobby.org. You can also write them at:

LIFE Lobby
926 J Street
Suite 522
Sacramento, CA 95814

Keeping HIV/AIDS Education

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nia, over 12,500 cases of full-blown AIDS have been reported among those aged 20–29. There are most certainly many more who are infected but who have not yet developed AIDS. It is highly likely that the majority of these young adults were infected at some point during their adolescence.

Under these circumstances, it is essential that we make it as easy as possible for schools to provide vital information about HIV and AIDS to their students. We must do this to stop further infection of our young people. Unfortunately, most school teachers do not have the necessary expertise on HIV and AIDS. Therefore, it is particularly important to prevent road blocks to schools bringing in outside experts that do have the necessary expertise. S.B. 1110 makes it particularly difficult for them to do this.

The lives of our children are at stake. Please write to Governor Wilson urging him to veto this bill.

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Taking a Stand Against Gangs

Continued from page 4

from 1994. These included 408 murders, 581 attempted murders, and 1,255 drive-by shootings.

The problem is, gangs do not limit their activities to one police jurisdiction. Frequently their activities cover several jurisdictions. Also, as gangs grow, there is too little turf in one area to provide opportunities for all the gang's members. So gangs send their members out to establish branches in new areas. In this way, many Los Angeles gangs have established branches in Northern California. As a result, no one local police department has the resources or the authority to combat the activities of a gang in all the areas in which the gang operates. A broader response is needed. Someone needs to assist and coordinate the anti-gang efforts of all the police jurisdictions in which a gang operates. A California Gang Prevention Director, as proposed by S.B. 547, would fill that need. This bill deserves our support. We urge you to write to the governor in support of this bill.

Become An Advocate!

Become our people of color advocate and help us choose one subject a month (usually a piece of legislation) that is of concern to the people of color community. You'll spend only about 10-12 hours a month researching possible subjects and composing letters and articles. Do you have Internet access? Lambda Letters can provide leads on sources of information and advice on composing letters and articles. This exciting position enables you to have a direct impact on legislation that affects our daily lives.

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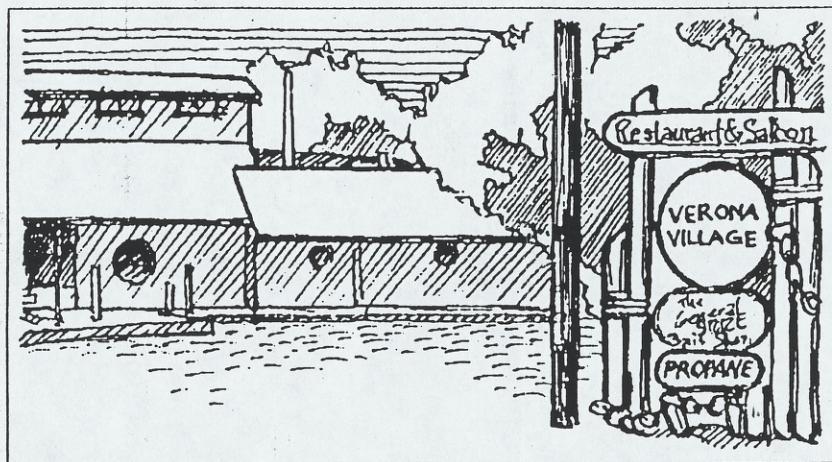
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